

**Sevier County Schools**  
**Foundational Literacy Skills Plan**

**Approved: May 21, 2021**

This Foundational Literacy Skills Plan has been approved by the Tennessee Department of Education and meets the requirements of the *Tennessee Literacy Success Act*. All portions of the Foundational Literacy Skills plan were submitted to the department and approved. To view the supplemental artifacts, please contact the district directly.

**Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades K-2**

Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, K-2 teachers in Sevier County used a supplemental foundational skills curriculum, Really Great Reading. This explicit, sounds-first foundational skills curriculum follows a systematic scope and sequence. It was implemented in addition to the ELA curriculum that was previously adopted. The designed block for ELA instruction is 120 minutes required, but recommended 150 minutes.

Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA), a foundational skills curriculum founded in the Science of Reading as well as a content building curriculum, will be fully implemented in grades K-2 in the 2021-2022 school year. The curriculum is aligned to the Tennessee ELA standards as approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. CKLA provides students in grades K-2 with 60 minutes of daily foundational skills instruction as the primary focus and 60 minutes of content-building instruction, for a 120 minute ELA block. The CKLA skills curriculum takes a sounds-first approach and follows a systematic progression of foundational literacy instruction including phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. In addition to the 60 minutes of foundational skills instruction in CKLA, 20-30 additional minutes daily is allotted for implementation of a supplemental foundational literacy curriculum, Really Great Reading, to reinforce foundational literacy skills. The 2021-2022 school year will be the 3rd year of full implementation of Really Great Reading in K-2. During both of the instructional blocks, teachers explicitly teach foundational literacy skills, implementing evidence-based strategies that follow a systematic scope and sequence. The content-building block provides an opportunity in which students will interact daily with increasingly complex texts and a focus on speaking and listening comprehension, building vocabulary, fluency, and writing.

The CKLA curriculum provides lessons focusing on direct foundational literacy instruction, and including evidence-based activities to support phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency. The instruction and student activities are cohesive; the skills taught in phonics are also connected to the students' spelling, decodable readers, and writing. This provides many opportunities for students to apply what they are learning in context. For example, if the phonics skill being taught is short vowels, students will be reading a decodable reader and have spelling words with short vowels.

Many supports for teachers and schools are in place to foster the implementation of CKLA in grades K-2. Teachers in grades K-2 will participate in regular professional learning opportunities to facilitate foundational literacy instruction. Further implementation support will be provided through Sevier County's participation in an Early Literacy Network grant as part of the TDOE's Reading 360 Initiative. This network will provide support for the system, schools, administrators, and teachers to navigate the implementation of CKLA and support foundational literacy instruction.

The Keys to Literacy Academy has been coordinated by Sevier County since 2018-2019, and facilitates professional development regarding foundational literacy instruction. This academy dives into the cognitive science behind reading instruction and supports a sounds-first approach to foundational literacy instruction. The Keys to Literacy Academy includes four on-site instructional days as well as an additional modeling/coaching component. As of March 2021 approximately 72% K-2 teachers and 80% of 3rd grade teachers have participated in this academy.

An ELA needs assessment survey is conducted annually to determine the needs of schools and teachers with regard to ELA instruction. This assessment will continue to drive decisions regarding support for teachers as it pertains to implementation, professional learning, and needs in the classroom.

### **Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5**

In the 2020-2021 school year the Sevier County School System began full implementation of Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) in grades 3-5. The curriculum supports an integrated content-building and foundational literacy block in grades 3-5. The curriculum materials are aligned to the Tennessee ELA standards and approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. The Sevier County Board of Education requires a 120 minute block of ELA instruction in grades 3-5. CKLA includes 120 minutes of instruction daily in grade 3 and 90 minutes in grades 4-5. This grade band is structured to provide content-building ELA instruction daily focusing on building vocabulary, speaking and listening, and comprehension. Foundational literacy standards are not addressed in isolation, but are integrated into the ELA block. While there is not a consistent daily routine, students spend a portion of their ELA block focusing on fluency, grammar, morphology, spelling, and writing. These components of ELA instruction vary depending on the lesson and unit. CKLA prioritizes a cohesive curriculum in which students apply what they are learning across reading, writing, speaking and listening standards.

A sample 5th grade lesson might include activating prior knowledge, small group reading, vocabulary instruction, word work, grammar, morphology, and writing. Students may work together to attend with precision to a complex text during think-pair-share activities. Vocabulary words are explicitly taught as they relate to the content at hand. The teacher will lead focused instruction regarding a specific word, giving student word choices to determine the correct use. Students use the information that they have learned in the text and write a letter to a character, including information from the text and apply skills learned. CKLA provides a structure for a cohesive literacy block, focusing on fluency, comprehension as it relates to reading, writing, speaking and listening.

The 2020-2021 school year was the first year of full implementation of CKLA in grades 3-5. Many supports for teachers and schools are in place for continued support of the new curriculum. Teachers participated in regular professional learning opportunities to facilitate literacy instruction through CKLA. Further implementation support will be provided through Sevier County's participation in a HQIM Literacy Implementation Network grant as part of the TN DOE's Reading 360 Initiative. This network will provide support for the system, schools, administrators, and teachers as they navigate the implementation of CKLA and support literacy instruction. Administrative support will be facilitated through professional learning surrounding the use of the TN Instructional Practice Guide walk-through tool. Additionally, support regarding intellectual preparation for lessons and units will be provided through collaborative work sessions.

An ELA needs assessment survey is conducted annually to determine the needs of schools and teachers with regard to ELA instruction. This assessment will continue to drive decisions regarding support for teachers as it pertains to implementation, professional learning, and needs in the classroom.

### **Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2**

Amplify - K-5 Core Knowledge Language Arts

### **Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5**

Amplify - K-5 Core Knowledge Language Arts

### **Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5. This screener complies with RTI<sup>2</sup> and Say Dyslexia requirements.**

aimswebPlus is the universal screener used for benchmarking in the fall, winter, and spring in grades K-2. It complies with the RTI<sup>2</sup> and Say Dyslexia requirements. In grades 3-5, CASE is the universal screener used for benchmarking in both reading and math in the fall, winter, and spring. aimswebPlus is used as a second layer of screener and progress monitoring in grades K-5.

### **Intervention Structure and Supports**

In grades K-5, the universal screening process is conducted three times per year (fall, winter, spring) in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students in grades K-2, are universally screened with a skills-based assessment, aimswebPlus. K-2 students are considered for tiered intervention based on aimswebPlus benchmark scores and additional data sources. Students in 3-5 are universally screened using a standards-aligned benchmark assessment, CASE. All 3-5 students scoring within the lowest projected achievement levels are considered for a second layer of screening to be conducted in the skills-based screener, aimswebPlus.

SLS (School Level Support) Teams review K-5 universal screener data to determine students who score between the 0-25th percentile. Diagnostic assessment data is used to determine a student's specific area of deficit in determining tier placement and the specific type of prescribed intervention. The RTI<sup>2</sup> SLS Team meets, at a minimum, at 4.5-5 week intervals and prior to the distribution of grade cards to determine student progress in interventions and if necessary, make appropriate adjustments based on multiple pieces of data.

Students served in Tier II and Tier III interventions receive additional minutes of daily intensive small group instruction focusing on identified areas of need in addition to the core academic instruction (Tier I). The daily recommended minimum instructional times for Tier II and Tier III, which are outlined in the TDOE RTI2 Framework are followed by the Sevier County School System. All at-risk students identified in Tier II or Tier III are progress monitored weekly or bi-weekly. Each student placed in RTI2 is provided daily explicit instruction in alignment with their targeted skill gap(s) and time-on-task requirements. Students who receive tiered intervention and are unsuccessful are referred for special education services.

The district's RTI2 framework for ELA tier component guidelines identifies suggested evidence-based intervention programs that may be used for Tier II and Tier III interventions. The district RTI2 ELA framework lists vetted programs that are designed to assist at-risk students in addressing areas of academic needs, such as phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. School-based intervention schedules require daily implementation and are outlined in each master schedule. Designated RTI2 time allotments are set and require educators to provide intensive instruction aligned to a specific skill deficit with the intent to close achievement gaps.

All students who qualify for reading intervention in Tier II, Tier III, Special Education, or who are referred by a core teacher of record with sufficient evidence to warrant screening are administered a dyslexia screener. The screening process is in compliance with the Tennessee Say Dyslexia law, which requires school districts to screen all students through their existing RTI2 screening process and use all available data in determining the need for a student to receive a dyslexia-specific intervention. Students who are identified as having at least one of the seven characteristics of dyslexia (phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, sound/symbol recognition, decoding skills, encoding skills, and rapid naming) are prescribed a research-based intervention to target the specific characteristic(s).

### **Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports**

In grades K-5, parents are notified upon the School Level Support (SLS) Team's determination of eligibility for tiered intervention (Tier II or Tier III). After each benchmark assessment, students scoring in the 0-25th percentile are considered "at-risk" for a significant reading deficiency. A parent intervention notification letter is issued to parents upon initial determination of placement. This letter communicates to parents the importance of reading proficiency in 3rd grade, including the impact that reading on grade level may have on high school-graduation, participation in post-secondary programs and future employment. Continuous communication of student progress in the intervention is provided, at minimum, every 4.5-5 six weeks.

An RTI2 progress report provides parents with a review of the progress, or lack of progress, their child is making in the intervention class. In addition, parents are notified of prescribed interventions and the amount of time designated for a specified tier level. Attached to the progress report, is the aimswebPlus report reflecting student scores in parent-friendly language. The aimswebPlus report provides a clear explanation on the identified skill gaps targeted during intervention and the depth

and extent of student needs. SLS Teams meet every 4.5-5 weeks to discuss student progress in intervention and discuss any necessary adjustments.

All students placed in reading intervention are screened for characteristics of dyslexia with at least one survey-level/diagnostic assessment to inform intervention needs. Students who exhibit at least one of the seven characteristics of dyslexia are provided explicit instruction to address the targeted skill deficit(s) within the RTI2 program. Additionally, parents are provided with dyslexia-specific resources that are noted on the district's website. SLS Teams monitor and evaluate student progress and record data, transitions, attendance, and prescribed interventions.

Based on student progress data, adjustments are tailored by skill deficit. Daily designated RTI2 time allotments are set and require educators to provide intensive instruction aligned to a specific skill deficit with the intent to close achievement gaps. For example, students in grades 3-5 may receive explicit instruction using HD Word if their assessment identifies gaps in phonemic awareness and phonics. Parents are notified of any tier transitions and are also provided with an individual progress monitoring report. Reading intervention activities for families to support literacy skills are identified on the At-Home Literacy Activities flyer that is attached to the progress report. Examples of literacy activities include: reading books together daily, practice sounding out words, talking about letters and sounds, practice reading the same words and stories multiple times to build fluency, and viewing videos targeting foundational skills.

The district's RTI2 framework provides schools ELA tier component guidelines, which identify suggested prescribed interventions. Based on a student's area of greatest need, teachers select a prescribed intervention from the RTI2 framework.

### **Professional Development Plan**

Beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, K-3 teachers in Sevier County have had the opportunity to participate in the Keys to Literacy Academy. The Academy provides four full days of professional development on The Science of Reading as well as a modeling/coaching component. As of 2021 approximately 72% K-2 teachers and 80% 3rd grade teachers have participated in this academy.

To further support professional growth regarding foundational literacy, teachers in Sevier County will have the opportunity to participate in the free and optional Reading 360 Early Literacy Training Series provided by the TDOE. The week 1, virtual and asynchronous training begins in April of 2021 as a prerequisite to the week 2 session. Two cohorts totaling 100 teachers are registered to participate in the week 2, in-person training in July 2021 in Sevier County, which will include general education teachers in grades K-5, special education, ESL, and intervention teachers.

In March of 2021 K-2 teachers participated in initial training for CKLA, which included direct instruction related to the foundational skills block. Optional unit planning is available for teachers during the summer months to further support the planning of foundational skills units.

K-5 teachers will also have opportunities to participate in regular curriculum updates, collaborative planning sessions, coaching sessions focused on the TN Instructional Practice Guide and support facilitated through the Early Literacy Network and HQIM Literacy Implementation Network.